



Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc

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Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow

Hon. Penny Sharpe MLC
Minister for the Environment
NSW Government

Email: office@sharpe.minister.nsw.gov.au

24 September 2026

Re: Excessive rural land clearing rates in NSW

Dear Minister Sharpe.

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society (the Society) is a community-based volunteer organisation with over 900 members. Our mission is to help protect, conserve and advocate for the natural environment of the Greater Blue Mountains. In fulfilling its mission, the Society advocates for the protection of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area and adjoining natural and protected areas. The Society's members are deeply dedicated to the protection of Australia's natural biodiversity.

On 27 April 2025 the Society wrote to Professor Hugh Durrant-Whyte, Commissioner, NSW Natural Resources Commission, and made a submission to the NSW Natural Resources Commission and its independent review examining options to further protect and restore biodiversity and overall ecosystem functioning on private rural land located in regional landscapes and enhanced value and support for landholders.

In its submission, the Society expressed its concern about the highly excessive and environmentally devastating levels of clearing of indigenous flora, indigenous fauna habitat and ecological communities occurring on private rural land in NSW. The Society noted that the rate of private rural land clearing in NSW has increased alarmingly over the last decade.

The Society proposed a number of reforms to rural land clearing assessment. The Society endorsed repeal of the Land Management (Native Vegetation) Code 2018 (Local Land Services

Act 2013 NSW). The Code enables private landowner self-assessment of proposed land clearing. Self-assessment has been an environmental catastrophe in NSW. Land clearing applications for both mature/old growth and regrowth indigenous vegetation should be subject to defined, ecologically detailed administrative approval processes. The Society endorsed appointment of an expert panel to assess clearing applications for mature/old growth indigenous vegetation located on private rural land.

The NSW Natural Resources Commission final report was due to be delivered to the NSW Government by March 26, 2026. However, apparently Professor Hugh Durrant-Whyte has not yet presented his report to the NSW Government (<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/news/20-years-nsw-land-clearing-data-reveals-next-steps-reform>).

The Society is deeply concerned that recent 2026 media reports reveal that overall, the rural land clearing rate in NSW has now reached record levels (<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/news/20-years-nsw-land-clearing-data-reveals-next-steps-reform>; https://www.nature.org.au/nsw_land_clearing_rates_unacceptable_reform_needed_slats_2024)

The Society believes that Professor Hugh Durrant-Whyte should present his final report to the NSW Government as soon as possible. The Society urges the Minister to repeal the Land Management (Native Vegetation) Code 2018 (Local Land Services Act 2013 NSW) and introduce a land-clearing assessment system that strongly prioritises the application of ecological criteria and environmental conservation principles to all rural land clearing proposals.

Thank you for considering my proposals concerning this important environmental issue. I look forward to receiving your response. I may be contacted at president@bluemountains.org.au.

Yours faithfully,



Dr Annette Sartor
President
Blue Mountains Conservation Society

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